



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

study and observation. Consequently one may write much of psychological factors and motives without setting forth the historical and observational bases.

Still, there are occasions where the psychological factor might have been seen by the author more clearly and with greater accuracy through more attention to history. For instance, he gives the impression that strikes are caused by a breaking out of resentment due to repression. This seems hardly compatible with the fact that there are more strikes in periods of prosperity than during business depression, when the repression of the working man is much greater. Similarly, the author explains the business cycle as due to impulsive profit-seeking; but two hundred years ago there was no business cycle, and yet there was impulsive selfishness.

On the whole, however, the unsophisticated reader will probably get from the book a pretty good idea of many of the major motives in the functioning of present-day social institutions. The author seems particularly interested in singling out such tendencies as rivalry, egoism, and domination, and contrasting them with sympathy, altruism, and intellectual attitudes. Here he is concerned with values. Of the motives in this conflict he values most highly the sympathetic altruistic group, and he thinks that education may do much to lessen the evil influence of selfishness.

So, it is thought, Dr. Williams's book should not be judged as a comprehensive account of the various streams of thought that now go under the term *social psychology*, which one naturally thinks of as the materials for a *Principles of Social Psychology*. As an interesting account of certain important motives operating in our institutional life, his work deserves praise.

WILLIAM F. OGBURN

The Witch-Cult in Western Europe: A Study in Anthropology.

MARGARET ALICE MURRAY. Oxford University Press, 1921.

In this recently published book, Miss Murray has presented a survey of the belief in witchcraft as it developed on the continent and in England during the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. She has treated the subject in an entirely novel fashion, for while the consensus of opinion among modern scientists, such as Alfred Lehman and William Sumner, has been to consider the belief in witchcraft as due to hysteria and suggestion, Miss Murray considers the witches to have been members of a secret religious cult, organized in opposition to Christianity.

This personal bias of Miss Murray's lends an interesting touch to what would otherwise be dull and somewhat Rabelaisian material. Unfortunately, however, this opinion of the author is altogether lacking in scientific foundation or caution. The basis of the writer's persuasion on this subject must be sought in a naïve desire for originality combined with an over-facile intuition. Perhaps something of her frame of mind in composing the book may be gleaned from the statement in which she decries "the unfortunate belief of modern writers in the capacity of women for hysteria." Surely, the present volume presents ample proofs of hysteria both in the past and in the present.

The belief in witchcraft was not confined to the civilized people of mediaeval times, as the present writer would lead us to suppose. It is rather a superstition often found among primitive peoples and intimately bound up with the life of the savage. Miss Kingsley writes that more deaths were caused by the persecution of witches in West Africa than by the entire slave trade. In this region, as elsewhere, most of the mortality, as well as plagues and blighted crops, were thought to be caused by witches. Hence, the accusation and the execution of witches were well-nigh simultaneous. It is hardly conceivable that Miss Murray would care to argue that certain West African Negroes belonged to a witch cult which was drawn up in opposition to the organized fetish religion of the locality.

If now we consider the practices of which the unfortunate victims of fanaticism in Western Europe were falsely accused, it can readily be ascertained that certain of these were of early origin, and had in fact been in vogue among primitive people, while others were entirely drawn from the realms of a popular distorted imagination. A third class were merely inversions of orthodox Christian ceremonials. Miss Murray has displayed the most fantastic lack of discrimination in her evaluation of the validity of the court testimony given at the witch trials. She has attached equal significance to the accusations that the accused rode on broomsticks, ate children, had sexual intercourse with the devil, turned away from Christianity, kept "fetish" animals, and similar misdemeanors.

Sumner has clearly pointed out that no importance whatsoever should be attached to the fact that the accused people freely confessed their complicity in these crimes, for the belief in witchcraft was the popular philosophy of the times. Certain women evidently desired to be witches. Hysterical women,¹ for example, courted the

¹ The frequent presence of local anaesthesia and supernumerary nipples on the witches gives some light as to their mental instability.

notoriety and power, and loved the consciousness of causing fear, in spite of the risk attached. Many perfectly sound-minded and innocent women could not be sure that they were not witches. They had dreams suggested by the popular notions, or had suffered from nervous affections which fell in with the popular superstitions.

There is, however, a certain amount of anthropological interest to be obtained from the various beliefs centered around the mediaeval witchcraft delusion. Thus cannibalism, human sacrifice, and the eating of the man-god are primitive ceremonials. It is not to be believed, however, that the civilized people of Europe ever practised these customs. Nevertheless, it is not unusual to accuse unpopular personages of such offenses. Thus the Jews of Russia, as well as the so-called witches, have constantly been under the accusation of child-eating. Riding on broomsticks, the possession of familiar spirits, the power to blight crops and injure animals and people, the carnal intercourse with demons, are beliefs of varying antiquity. None of them have ever been founded on the remotest facts, yet some of them are still accepted as truths by the ignorant masses of Europe today.

The third variety of witchcraft ritual, as mentioned above, may be classed under the inverted Christianity heading. Thus the Witches' Sabbath, the homage to the devil, the use of urine as a substitute for holy water, the peculiar burning of candles, and the still more peculiar partaking of the Devil's sacrament; what are these customs but a mockery of the Christian ritual? Why should Miss Murray seek to refer these rites back to paganism when their true explanation is so apparent?

It would be needless to discuss further the bewildering mass of false inferences which Miss Murray has extracted from her material. If, on the one hand, it may startle the casual reader to be told that the devil had intercourse with his worshippers by means of artificial phalli, this blunder pales in comparison with the author's later presumption in accusing Joan of Arc of actual witchcraft. Truly, if history is to receive any benefit from anthropology, as it well may, books of the present nature cannot be regarded as furthering the interest of such a movement.

It may be that the present book has a certain amount of scientific value inasfar as it has organized and presented the evidence of the witch trials in Western Europe. But the main thesis of the book, that "witchcraft was a definite religion with beliefs, ritual, and organization as highly developed as that of any other cult in the world" remains, and will always remain, unproven.

E. M. LOEB